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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000268

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SUBJECT: RENEWED AU-LIBYAN MEDIATION EFFORTS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 266

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The African Union and Libya have started a renewed mediation effort aimed at avoiding the need to apply sanctions. The African Union questions whether the three main Mauritanian protagonists can ever come up with a consensual plan if left to their own devices, and suggests the international community needs to put something concrete on the table. Discussions seem to lean towards the military agenda, but President Abdallahi said he is open to hearing what they might propose. Absent General Aziz abandoning his electoral strategy, the FNDD sees no basis for mediation.
End

¶2. (C) AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra and Libyan Secretary for African Affairs Ali Abdel Salam Triki completed three-day visit to Mauritania on April 13 during which they met with the full range of political players including President Abdallahi, President of the National Assembly Messaoud Ould Boulkheir and General Aziz. The emissaries did not meet with diplomats, but Lamamra spoke with Charge by phone the morning of April 13. Lamamra indicated the AU was trying once again to find a consensual resolution to the Mauritanian crisis that could allow the return to constitutional order and avoid the applications of sanctions on the regime. He said the AU's desire was to unlock the current deadlock between the hard positions taken by Abdallahi and Aziz. He noted that, despite its recognized failings, Aziz' commitment to resign and to pass power back to civilian authority was at least something positive to work on. Charge responded that we saw nothing promising in what we had seen to date in the process -- the ability to see where government funds were being directed was now nearly impossible, Aziz has spent months putting his people in place in all the positions that might ensure free and fair elections, and he continues to repress dissent and manipulate the political and judicial systems to bring down his enemies. The U.S. can support early elections -- as also offered by President Abdallahi -- but not under the framework being put forward by Aziz.

¶3. (C) Lamara worried that the inflexibility of positions made it impossible to help the Mauritians work out their own problems. He recognized that the election process as currently spelled out was not credible and was subject to manipulation by General Aziz. That said, he suggested it was

time for the international community to put something concrete on the table that would at least meet international concerns -- suggesting this included a mechanism where Abdallahi accepts an interim presidency under the President of the Senate but with a consensus government that would in fact be independent of Aziz' manipulation and that would have enough time put together a credible electoral process. He said that when he has met April 12 with President Abdallahi in Lemden he did not float any specific recommendations but the President had said he would be open to studying any proposal put forward. Lamamra pocketed this, "at least he didn't say 'no'" response as something to work on. Lamamra said he would be giving some thought to a specific proposal and might be back in Mauritania in a week to ten days. He added he thought the AU might call another Contact Group meeting to discuss such a proposal before coming back. Charge told Lamamra that it was unlikely the U.S. would back any proposal that could not gain the consent of President Abdallahi and the FNDD.

14. (C) Charge spoke late April 13 with FNDD "Foreign Minister" Mohamed Ould Maouloud who had received readouts of the two AU/Libyan meetings with President Abdallahi and Ould Boulkheir. Ould Maouloud saw the initiative as "exploratory" and an effort to restart after the debacle of Qadhafi's mediation effort. He said the Libyan Triki had served as "head of delegation" to "save face" but found the message far more conciliatory than Qadhafi's. The delegation had probed -- but not pushed -- to see whether the President and FNDD could be brought to accept the transition plan put forward by Aziz. The Mauritians had responded that they would be open

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to renewed dialogue but that the General would have to cancel his electoral initiative first -- otherwise the FNDD would only be discussing participation in a process they see as critically flawed and not credible.

15. (C) Ould Maouloud said the FNDD in fact sees little utility in diplomatic activity at this time and is focusing most of its efforts on internal opposition. Highly upset by the turn in French policy and still reeling from the Qadhafi whirlwind, the FNDD leadership is suspicious of the neutrality of the multiple negotiating efforts. While speaking with the Charge, Ould Maouloud received a call saying Senegalese Foreign Minister Gadio was coming April 14 to continue Senegalese mediation efforts (apparently uncoordinated with the AU). Ould Maouloud could only smile. In a conversation later with the FNDD's Abdel Koudouuss Ould Abeidna (calling from Paris), Charge was told the FNDD sees the Senegalese as trying to keep them distracted so they can't focus on their own anti-Aziz strategy. Ould Abeidna saw the heavy hand of France behind everything, adding that when they had pushed back at Qadhafi for his anti-democratic mediation efforts, Qadhafi responded, "but you understand its the French who sent me to do their dirty work."

HANKINS